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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 000119

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ZFR ZFR - DISREGARD AMMAN 000119 AND MCN'S, CABLE WILL BE RESENT UNDER A NEW MRN AND MCN'S - ZFR ZFR - DISREGARD

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TAGS: PREL JO

SUBJECT: SENATOR KERRY'S JANUARY 4 MEETING WITH KING ABDULLAH

Classified By: Charge David Hale, Reasons 1.4 (B) & (D)

¶1. (C) Senator John Kerry (D-MA) met for nearly an hour with King Abdullah on January 4. Deputy Prime Minister Muasher (as acting Foreign Minister), Royal Court Minister al-Rifai, and Palace Media advisor Bahous joined Nancy Stetson and Charge in the meeting, which focused almost exclusively on the critical milestones facing the Middle East in January, with Palestinian and Iraqi elections.

¶2. (C) The King anticipated that the election of Abu Mazen would bring to office a strong partner for Israel, who could be counted on to work outstanding security issues. The King hoped the international community would move quickly to provide the tangible support Abu Mazen needed to demonstrate to the Palestinian people that moderation would bring rewards. The Israelis needed to help as well by easing up on closures and curfews and releasing more Palestinian tax revenues. During UK Prime Minister Blair's recent private visit to Aqaba, the King had explored the possibility of bringing the date of the London conference forward, so there was no lag after the elections for spoilers to exploit. However, he understands complicated logistics had dictated the March date. The King expressed guarded optimism about the opportunities emerging on the Israeli-Palestinian front. When asked, Muasher described the results of the Taba talks on final status as ideal, but far removed from Israeli Prime Minister Sharon's thinking. He feared Sharon was not prepared to move beyond the end of phase two of the roadmap (a Palestinian state with provisional borders in control of 50 percent of its territory) not a viable situation. The King expressed confidence in the President's expression of determination, during his December visit to Washington, to move forward on the two state vision. As he had with the President, he emphasized to Senator Kerry why the viability of a Palestinian state is of such critical importance to Jordan; failure to reach that aim will resuscitate old claims of "Jordan is Palestine." If steps are not taken urgently to achieve a viable Palestinian state, "facts on the ground" could soon make the goal unattainable. The King described renewed Arab efforts, led by Egypt and supported by the Saudis, to highlight the importance of the Beirut Declaration, especially in the run-up to this Spring's regular Arab League summit.

¶3. (C) Asked if there was linkage between developments in the West Bank/Gaza and Iraq, the King said the two situations feed off each other in the public mind. To the extent that progress toward a solution of the Palestinian problem addresses Arab frustration, then the greater the strength of forces of moderation as they fight terrorism and extremism. Asked about the prospects for the Iraqi elections, the King reviewed his constructive discussions with IIG Prime Minister Allawi and their shared conviction of the importance of holding the elections on time and of maximizing Sunni participation. The King reviewed his well-voiced concerns about Iranian influence in Iraq and how it could lead, in a worst-case scenario, to the emergence of an Iranian dominated theocratic regime. If Sunni Muslim participation in the elections is imperfect, the King continued, it would be important to look for other ways to draw the Sunnis into the process, as a bulwark against Iranian advances. The King also urged faster efforts to reconstitute the army, both to mop up the huge pool of unemployed Sunnis who were ripe recruits for the insurgency, and to improve security. He advocated greater use of Jordan for training of Iraqi recruits, including by integrating units into Jordan's only 18-month training cycle. He expressed frustration that the Iraqis were asking Jordan for basic supplies for their troops, which he thought should be provided as an integral part of fielding these units. He was pleased with the success in our joint training of Iraqi counter-insurgency units, which have performed well when deployed.

¶4. (C) Asked about the Iranian nuclear program, the King said a US/EU united front was the only diplomatic way to influence Iranian behavior; Tehran was adept at exploiting any hint of a gap. In any event, it was his estimate that the Iranians were determined to proceed with their nuclear

program regardless of the international community's views. In the longer run, coalition success in stabilizing Iraq was the best way to contain Iran and the "axis of evil"; conversely, failure to do so would allow Iran to expand its influence immeasurably. Iraq had become the new strategic battlefield between the U.S. and Iran, he said. Asked to assess the global war on terrorism, the King said we had not lost ground, but not gained much either. Without progress on the peace process and in Iraq, street-level militancy would grow throughout the region) affecting all regimes in the long-run. Jordan was also working on a long-term and global effort to mobilize moderate, non-governmental Islamic leaders behind the "Amman message." The aim was to enable the mainstream of Islam to counter extremists, rhetoric by noting that violence in the name of religion was a violation of the tenets of Islam, a faith of tolerance. He would later BE RESENT UNDER NEW MRN AND MCN'S - ZFR ZFR - DISREGARD be in touch with us on how to extend this process to Muslim communities in the U.S., in order to combat homegrown Salafist movements. Turning to Syria, the King reviewed his understanding of the direct messages the USG has conveyed to Bashar al-Asad, and his intention to reinforce them when the two meet in Amman the week of January 9.

15. (C) The meeting concluded with the King's review of Jordan's supplemental assistance request, which he viewed as enabling him to gain essential political insulation so he can continue to "stick his neck out" on unpopular but necessary steps to support our common strategic goals in the region. He was grateful for the enormous help Jordan had already received, but if the U.S. was to continue to look to Jordan as a platform in the troubled region, more was needed. Senator Kerry praised the enormous help Jordan had provided and pledged his personal support in congress's review of Jordan's needs. Hexam
HALE